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ABSTRACT

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the

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Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Self-Disclosures in the Development of Relationships

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Abstract

A social scenario approach was used to test hypotheses about the order of disclosure in same-sex and mixed-sex developing friendships of four types of statements: positive intrapersonal, negative intrapersonal, positive interpersonal, negative interpersonal. Results indicated that, as predicted, disclosures about the self precede disclosures of reactions to the other. Positively valenced disclosures occurred before negative ones. Negative interpersonal statements were consistently disclosed last. Intimacy level, the conventional predictor of timing of disclosure, was controlled for. A replication of this study which changed the content of statements within the framework of the typology strongly supports these findings.

Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Self-Disclosures in the Development of Relationships.

Investigations of the process of self-disclosure in developing relationships have focused primarily on the intimacy level of disclosures (Altman and Taylor, 1973). It has been consistently found that the pattern of self-disclosure is from lower to higher levels of intimacy. Intimacy is, however, a very global concept. When disclosures are evaluated for their degree of "intimacy," it is unclear what dimension(s) is invoked. Is it the specific content, the affective valence, whether the disclosure is about self or other, etc.?

Jourard's work (1971) early demonstrated that some content areas are viewed as more intimate than others and are disclosed selectively. We propose that different types of self-disclosure serve different functions in dyadic relationships and therefore occur at different times in the development of these relationships. Specifically, the valence of disclosures, positive or negative, and whether they are about the self or the other are important determinants of when they are disclosed. Therefore, we created a new typology in which four kinds of self-disclosures are expected to occur at different times in developing relationships. Specifically, a self-disclosure is <u>intrapersonal</u> when the information disclosed is only about oneself with no reference to the target person, e.g., "I feel awful when embarrassed in public." A self-disclosure is <u>interpersonal</u> when the information disclosed is about oneself with direct reference to the target person, e.g., "When you embarrass me in public, I feel awful." A self-disclosure is <u>positive</u> when it contains an expressed positive evaluation of self or other. A self-disclosure is <u>negative</u> when it contains an expressed negative evaluation of self or other. Thus, the four types

of self-disclosure are positive intrapersonal, negative intrapersonal, positive interpersonal, and negative interpersonal disclosures.

The major hypotheses and assumptions of this study are:

(1) Intrapersonal statements are expected to precede interpersonal disclosures. Intrapersonal disclosures which provide information about the self and promote "becoming known" to the other necessarily occur early in relationships. Interpersonal disclosures which provide reactions about the other usually occur after a period of interaction and thus, later. Reactions to the other which are evaluative are also potentially disruptive and risky.

(2) Positive interpersonal self-disclosures will occur earlier than negative interpersonal self-disclosures. Positive statements about the other are reinforcing and promote cohesiveness in the relationship. Negative reactions to the other are potentially disruptive and will be disclosed later in relationships.

(3) Negative intrapersonal self-disclosures will occur earlier than positive intrapersonal self-disclosures. Positive statements about the self are potentially interpretable as bragging or being "one-up" and thus will be disclosed later than negative self-referents which do not imply an effort to appear better than the other.

Two minor hypotheses were also tested:

(4) Females perceive themselves as developing relationships faster than males.

(5) Same sex relationships are perceived as developing more quickly than opposite sex relationships.

STUDY I

Subjects

Eighty female and eighty male undergraduates from the Psychology subject pool at the State University of New York at Buffalo served as

subjects. Each subject was assigned to one of eight conditions which varied the sex of the experimenter, sex of subject, and the sex of the "friend" in a developing relationship. Twenty subjects were run in each condition.

Procedure

A social interaction scenario approach was used in which the development of a hypothetical friendship was described to each subject. The subject was asked to identify with a discloser of the same sex and to order a set of twenty statements as they would have occurred in the development of the relationship.

Twelve statements were used to test the major hypotheses; three each were positive intrapersonal, negative intrapersonal, positive interpersonal and negative interpersonal.

Statements used in the experiment were drawn from a pool of sixty which were developed using Taylor and Altman's (1966) intimacy scaled content areas. To control for intimacy, the statements were pre-rated by 24 undergraduate judges on a scale from 1 (not at all intimate) to 11 (extremely intimate). Of the three statements in each statement type, one was low intimacy ($\bar{X}$ = 3.5 - 5.4), one was moderate ($\bar{X}$ = 5.5 - 7.4) and one was high intimacy ($\bar{X}$ = 7.5 - 9.4). Three of the eight neutral statements also represented the three intimacy levels. The other five were all below 3.0. The deck of twenty cards was shuffled before each subject arrived to insure a random presentation.

After ordering the cards each subject gave a time estimate of how long the dyad had known each other when each statement was disclosed, and how typical of subjects' own relationships the statement was. These data constituted the dependent variables which were analyzed in a six factor

analysis of variance.

STUDY II

A second study of the same design was run with 14 subjects from the same subject pool in each condition. The procedure was identical. The major differences were 1) the content of each statement was changed while still maintaining the four types of statements which were pre-rated in the same manner for intimacy level; 2) the statements were pre-rated for valence and positive, negative and neutral statements were selected from a prescribed range; 3) there were different experimenters.

Results or Findings

We will discuss primarily those findings which are consistent across both studies and bear on the hypotheses.

As predicted, intrapersonal statements were ordered earlier and estimated to occur earlier in time than interpersonal statements (Study I: p/order < .001; p/log time < .01; Study II: p/order < .001, p/log time < .01). Table 1 presents these results for both studies. The second hypothesis that positive interpersonal statements would be ordered earlier than negative interpersonal disclosures was also supported in both studies (Study I: p/order < .001; p/log time < .001; Study II: p/order < .001; p/log time < .001). As can be seen in Table 2, the time estimate data and the order data are quite consistent. This also occurs at all three intimacy levels. In our first study, intrapersonal statements were ordered significantly differently but in the opposite direction from the one predicted, i.e., positive intrapersonal statements preceded negative ones. In the second study you will notice that there were no differences between positive and negative intrapersonal statements either in ordering or time estimates. In both studies (Table 3) there was a main effect for statement valence, positive

statements preceding negative ones (Study I: p/order < .001; p/log time < .001; Study II: p/order < .001, p/log time < .001).

In Study I the three way interaction of statement type, valence and intimacy level (Study I: p/order < .001; p/log time < .001; Study II: p/order < .01; p/log time < .01) provided some support for the ideas advanced in the third hypothesis. Interestingly, at high intimacy levels negative intrapersonal disclosures were ordered before positive ones, while this did not occur at moderate or low levels of intimacy. Unfortunately, in the second study we did not replicate this finding.

In both studies the range for order and time estimates over intimacy levels is much greater for positive statements and for intrapersonal statements and quite narrow for negative statements and for interpersonal statements. Negative interpersonal statements, particularly, occur late and are seen as less typical in relationships.

Turning to the hypotheses predicting sex differences, in Study I there were no overall differences between males and females in their estimates of how fast the relationship developed (Hypothesis 4). Contrary to our predictions, however, males in Study II gave shorter average time estimates ($\bar{X}$ = 3.7) than females ($\bar{X}$ = 4.0, $p < .05$).

Again, contrary to our prediction in hypothesis 5, in the first study same sex relationships were estimated to take longer to develop ($\bar{X}$ = 4.06) than opposite-sex relationships ($\bar{X}$ = 3.48; $p < .01$) and also ordered earlier ($\bar{X}$ = 13.25) than opposite sex relationships ($\bar{X}$ = 12.93, $p < .01$). In the second study there were no differences. In retrospect, it appears that our own inferences from previous research predicting sex differences in this situation were unfounded.

Some interesting sex differences occurred in estimates of how typical of subjects' relationships these disclosures were. In the first study, women estimated that these disclosures were more typical of their relationships than men ($p < .01$). However, this difference is a function of the very untypical ratings of men in relationships with men as compared with mixed sex relationships or women's relationships with other women ($p < .01$). In both studies, women rated interpersonal disclosures as more typical than intrapersonal ones while men made no distinction. Interpersonal disclosures were more typical for women than men (Study I: $p < .01$; Study II: $p < .01$).

Finally, we consider experimenter effects. In the first study, women subjects with the female experimenter did give longer time estimates than subjects with the male investigator ($p < .01$). There were also a few complex interactions involving experimenter sex. When we changed experimenters none of these effects were found. Thus, it appears that these effects are of individual experimenters rather than an effect of experimenter sex.

Conclusions

Previous studies of self-disclosure have focused primarily on the intimacy level of the disclosures and neglected other dimensions of the process. This study has clearly demonstrated that the valence of disclosure and whether it is about the self or the other are important determinants of the timing of disclosure as relationships develop. Thus we have highlighted several new areas of investigation for researchers who wish to explore the use of self-disclosure in developing relationships.

Table 1

Means for Order and Time Estimates for

Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Statements.

Statement Type	Study I	Study II
	Order of Statements (Scale 1-20)	
Intrapersonal	11.87	11.61
Interpersonal	14.31	15.07
	Log-time Estimates	
Intrapersonal	3.46	3.49
Interpersonal	4.08	4.27

Table 2

Means for Order and Time Estimates of

Statement Type and Statement Valence.

	Study I		Study II	
Statement Type	Statement Valence		Statement Valence	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
	Order of Statements (Scale 1-20)			
Intrapersonal	11.03^{a}	12.72^{b}	11.56^{a}	11.65^{a}
Interpersonal	12.31^{c}	16.31^{d}	13.13^{b}	17.01^{c}
	Log-time Estimates			
Intrapersonal	3.20^{a}	3.72^{b}	3.47^{a}	3.51^{a}
Interpersonal	3.64^{c}	4.51^{d}	3.84^{b}	4.70^{c}

Note. Within each table means with common subscripts do not differ at the .05 level as indicated by the Newman-Keuls procedure.

Table 3

Means for Order and Time Estimates of

Positive and Negative Statements.

Statement Valence	Study I	Study II
	Order of Statements (Scale 1-20)	
Positive	11.67	12.35
Negative	14.51	14.33
	Log-time Estimates	
Positive	3.42	3.66
Negative	4.15	4.11